

On-Base First Questions and Answers

Q1. Who decided to mandate moving military families on base?

A1. In an effort to save money across the U.S. Department of Defense, leadership felt it was in the military's best interest to use the family housing which is currently available on U.S. installations, eliminating the need to spend money on housing allowances. This move isn't just in Misawa; all Dept of Defense installations in Japan are working towards implementing mandatory housing in the near future.

Q2. How many families lived on/off base previous to this policy? What was the FH fill-rate?

A2. Of the nearly than 7,500 military members, civilian employees and their families who call Misawa home, about 4,104 reside on base leaving just over 3,300 who live in the communities among our Misawa hosts.*** Misawa manages the more than 2,241 FH units on base. As of July 1, about 72% were occupied.

Q3. Why is the DOD forcing families to live on base? Follow up: Why did the military wait until now to institute this policy?

A3: The DOD is not forcing anything. We want to be better stewards of both US and Japanese taxpayers' money by better utilizing the resources available to us. If we have the housing, we should be using it before we pay additional money for people to live off base. That has been our policy with our dormitories and it is now our policy with FH.

Follow-up: Prior to Feb 2008, Misawa AB had a mandatory on-base FH assignment. It's only been since then that members were given choices to live on or off base. After measuring the decline in on-base quarters, leadership decided that it was more prudent to make the on-base first policy a reality.

Q4. Housing on Misawa has been the reason many families want to live downtown in the first place. Are there any plans to renovate FH?

A4. Through funding from the DOD as well as the Government of Japan, a comprehensive renovation plan is currently underway to improve family housing on base.

Q5. What kind of economic impact will that have to housing agencies/business-owners downtown?

A5. There is no way to accurately anticipate the economic impact. The local community has been an attraction for military members because of the living opportunities which are available here. Since families already stationed on Misawa will not be affected by this policy, it is logical that the effects of the policy won't be visualized immediately or abruptly. Over time and through attrition, the number of families living downtown will be reduced. In the past, as one family would leave Misawa, their house would remain empty until another family moved in. Now, these houses in the local communities may remain empty longer than before. Note that this policy will not change individual service branches' policies regarding unaccompanied military members who are eligible to reside off-base.

Q6: In addition to renovating housing units, is the base planning to expand any of its organic services, such as AAFES or FSS facilities for the increase in residents on base?

A6: The facilities on our bases are designed to support the entire base populace – on and off base. If issues arise where services appear to be inadequate for the population, challenges will be addressed. But the impact is not expected to be severe or visibly affect the outstanding support structure on the installation.

Q7: What is the effective date of this policy?

A7: This policy is effective for all members moving to Misawa starting 1 Sep 09

Q8: When did you develop this policy?

A8: Much time and research went into the creation of this policy. First, leaders had to ensure this was the right answer for our Airmen, Sailors, Soldiers and Marines, living situations. We had to weigh that against our need to trim costs in the military. This policy has been reviewed, rewritten and revised several times to minimize the effect on military members' quality of life.

Q9: When the preparation for this policy/project started?

A9: The first proposal for this policy was created around March of this year. 35 CES Housing Office started drafting a proposed "Mandatory Housing" policy in an effort to save money across the U.S. Department of Defense; leadership felt it was in the best interests to use the family housing which is currently available on U.S. installations, eliminating the need to spend money on housing allowances.

Q10: Does this apply to all services?

A10: This policy applies to members of all branches of service who are commissioned officers, warrant officers and enlisted personnel on active duty and eligible for BAH at the with-dependent rate. The 35 FW Commander is the Executive Agent of the 2,241 FH units and 35th Civil Engineering Housing Office is the primary point of contact for this transition.

Q11: Who will be able to live off base?

A11: Following the installment of the new policy, unaccompanied military members, within individual service rank requirements, will be allowed to move off base upon assignment to Misawa. The 35th CES Housing Office will first attempt to place military accompanied families in base housing.

Q12: When did you notify local community?

A12: The local community is being notified at this time.

Q13: What is the benefit for Misawa to implement this policy?

A13: The benefit for Misawa, as well as the other Japan installations, is the proper stewardship of taxpayer resources. If there are empty houses on our installations, we should be filling those homes first and utilizing the resources available before spending additional money to move military families off base.

Q14: Are you planning to move all service members to live on base in future?

A14: That is not the plan now, and not in the foreseeable future. There aren't enough FH units to house every military family on base, so the idea of moving all personnel onto base isn't realistic at this time. For now, we are concentrating on spreading the word to our neighbors outside our gates, as well as the rest of the U.S. Armed Forces of this new policy.

Q15: How much money can the DOD save (how much does local community lose the business) following the policy?

A15: There is no way to tell exactly how much the DOD will save by implementing this policy. But in these economic times and with dwindling budgets, every penny we save is a penny we can spend elsewhere on the military's needs. Currently 72% of FH units are occupied. The hope is that this may save \$30-\$50 million annually.

Q16: Did you or are you going to build new houses following the policy? If so, how many?

A16: Currently, there is one GOJ funded project planned to construct 24 additional SNCO housing units. We hope to see this project receive funding and begin construction in the next few years. In addition to this, we are renovating our existing housing and just awarded a \$110M contract to renovate 539 housing units over the next 5 years.

Q17: If a military family has a pet, will certain housing be off limits to them?

A17: Housing has designated four tower apartments and all H-style units are pet friendly. Current policies on pets and housing will remain unchanged as a result of these policies.

Q18: If there are no pet friendly FH units available within 30 days of arrival, will I be required to get rid of my pet and accept a non-pet friendly home?

A18: If there are no pet friendly FH units on base and you PCSed from your last base with your pet, you will be allowed to secure off base housing.

Q19: Will I be reimbursed for kennel costs for my pet(s)?

A19: No. The pet(s) travel at the owner's expense and are not considered a dependent of the member.

Q20: I'm a smoker and would like an FH unit that allows smoking. Am I allowed to wait for a FH unit that allows smoking?

A20: You will not be allowed to wait for an offer that allows smoking within the home. Every offer is made IAW AFI 32-6001, Family Housing Management, and is based on your grade and family size. You will be given two offers and we cannot guarantee either of them will be a non-tower home. It depends on what is available at the time of offer.

Q21: I'm a non-smoker and would like a FH unit that is non-smoking. Am I allowed to wait for a FH unit that is non-smoking?

A21: You will not be allowed to wait for a non-smoking FH unit. Every offer is made IAW AFI 32-6001, Family Housing Management, and is based on your grade and family size. You will be given two offers and we cannot guarantee either of them will be a non-tower home. It depends on what is available at the time of offer. The 35th FW Commander implemented a non-smoking policy in the tower apartments Jun 09. The commander is considering that a percentage of H-style units become non-smoking.

Q22: I have a Japanese spouse and she wants to reside off-base. Can we live off-base?

A22: No, we cannot make an exception for Japanese spouse because that would be discriminating against other members married to spouses of a different nationality other than Japanese.

Q23: How many offers will I receive?

A23: IAW AFI 32-6001, Family Housing Mgt, you will receive up to 2 offers. They may or may not be given at the same time. It depends on what is available at the time of offer. If you turn down the first offer and don't want to take the second offer, the first offer may have been assigned to the next member on the waiting list.

Q24: I'm a civilian. Am I bound by the on-base first policy?

A24: No.

Q25: I have pet allergies and only pet friendly towers are available. There is no FH unit available or projected to be available within 30 days. What should I do?

A25: You will be asked to submit an Exception to Policy (ETP) request with documented medical proof. This will then be staffed to the 35 MSG/CC for approval. The Housing Office will guide you through the preparation and staff the package.

Q26: Will I have to wait longer than 30 days for on-base housing?

A26: If a FH unit is not available or projected to be available within 30 days of your arrival based on your pay grade and family size, you will be authorized to secure community housing. A non-availability letter will be provided by Housing Office. You will be required to secure an off-base home within your FH entitlement within 30 days or your TLA will stop. Example: If the member qualifies for a 3-bedroom entitlement and a 3-bedroom community home is available, but the member chooses to wait for a 4-bedroom community home, the TLA entitlement will stop at the time government furnishings could be delivered to the 3 bedroom community home.

Q27: Only North base housing units are available, but I want main base. Can I wait?

A27: No, a North base housing offer is a valid offer and is considered as such. You are given up to two valid FH offers. One or both may be north base housing offers and you must accept one.

Q28: Will SNCOs and Officers fall under the same policy?

A28: Yes, all accompanied personnel will fall under this on-base first policy. Designated K&E personnel will be assigned and managed by the Housing Office and K&E members do not have a turn down option.

Q29: Why is this policy happening only in Japan (USAFE is not doing this)?

A29: The Under Secretary of Defense states in a Memorandum dated 21 Nov 2008, that mandatory assignment to "government controlled" housing is allowed. In an effort to save money across the U.S. Department of Defense, leadership felt it was in the military's best interest to use the family housing which is currently available on U.S. installations, eliminating

the need to spend money on housing allowances. This move isn't just in Misawa; all Dept of Defense installations in Japan are working towards implementing mandatory housing in the near future.

Q30: I arrived last week. Will my family and I be forced to live on base?

A30: No, until the on-base first policy's effective date and the housing application effective date will determine your entitlement. Members must check in with Housing Office within 24 hrs or next duty day after arrival. That date is used to record your effective date along with TLA entitlements. You will have up to the last day end of duty day prior to policy effective date.

Q31: What if there is a waiting list?

A31: You will be put on a waiting list if a FH unit is available or projected to be available within 30 days of your arrival based on your pay grade and family size. If a FH unit is not available within 30 days, you will be authorized to secure community housing. A non-availability letter will be provided by Housing Office.

Q32: Will I have to take a smaller/larger place if available?

A32: The Housing office will offer the first available unit for your grade and family size. If one is not available for your grade and family size, housing has the authority to offer +1/-1 (smaller/larger) category IAW AFI 32-6001.